SUPPLIER PORTAL FOR GLOBAL PROCUREMENT E-BUSINESS APPLICATIONS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention generally relates to a supplier portal to assist in global procurement in an electronic business (e-business) environment and, more particularly, to a single point of contact for all electronic procurement (e-procurement) applications using a database to entitle users to access restricted applications available from the portal. The portal provides establishing a very flexible registration process customizable for each application; e.g., defining 1 to n level approval cycles, defining application specific registration fields, authorizing new tasks to a role, etc.

BACKGROUND DESCRIPTION

[0002] In the past, global procurement users had to keep track of a different user identification (userid), password and universal resource locator (URL) for each of the global procurement applications they used. The process of managing business, technical and operational data became burdensome because of the many redundancies and different user interfaces required in accessing procurement applications.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a way for users to access all e-business applications through a specialized site which streamlines registration processes by eliminating redundancies and speeding application use through a single user login and consistent user interface.

[0004] According to the invention, there is provided a supplier portal that is a single pont of entry for suppliers to access all strategic procurement applications. The suppliers use a single userid/password to access all the applications, and the userid/password can be obtained from a registration site.

[0005] The registration site is an application which must be used by a Web user (customer, supplier, business partner) to access any internet/extranet application. The registration site supports Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) for authentication. Once registered on the registration site, the Web user can either access an application available in the open access area of the supplier portal or can submit a request to access applications that are available in the controlled section of the supplier portal.

[0006] A customized application specific registration form is presented to the user for input when access to an application is desired. The request for access to a controlled application is routed to the appropriate application administrator(s)/guest coordinator for approval. Once approved, the user and/or supplier profile will be stored in the Portal Common Registration (PCR) data store and the user notified of the approval to access the application. On subsequent login to the supplier portal, the user will see a customized supplier portal page with links to the open access area applications and controlled applications the user has been authorized to access by application administrators. Individual applications, however, will control the entitlement to the applications; i.e., what a user can and can not do in the application. An application may choose to administer the entitlement variables within the application itself or use the PCR data store to capture those variables and keep its local variable set synchronized with the PCR data store.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] The foregoing and other objects, aspects and advantages will be better understood from the following detailed description of a preferred embodiment of the invention with reference to the drawings, in which:

[0008] **FIG. 1** is a flow diagram illustrating the supplier coordinator registration process;

[0009] **FIG. 2** is a flow diagram illustrating user registration initiated by a supplier coordinator;

[0010] **FIG. 3** is a flow diagram illustrating user registration initiated by a supplier (guest) user;

[0011] **FIG. 4** is a block diagram showing the data flow of the supplier portal architecture according to the invention; and

[0012] **FIG. 5** is a block diagram showing the data flow of the PCR application registration according to the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT OF THE INVENTION

[0013] Portal Common Registration (PCR) Every user, a guest company user or a host company user will be assigned a role level. The role level determines the tasks a user is authorized to perform. When the user logs in to the Portal, a customized page predicated on the user's role level is displayed listing the tasks user can perform. The flexible architecture of the Portal DB2 DataStore will allow the Portal administrator to easily add/delete tasks to a user role without affecting the PCR design. Initially, the following user roles and their respective tasks are defined in the Portal DB2 DataStore:

[0014] Portal-Administrator (host company)

- [0015] Add new organization profile (host or guest company)
- [0016] Change an existing organization profile
- [0017] Add a now application profile
- [0018] Change an existing application profile
- [0019] Request access to an application on a user's behalf
- [0020] Define new tasks
- [0021] Define new user role levels
- [0022] Assign tasks to role levels
- [0023] Define application access approval cycle
- [0024] Update basic user profile data, e.g., name, phone number, e-mail address, etc.

[0025] Application Administrator (host company)

- [0026] Request access to an application on a user's behalf